

My name is Greg Peracchio, and I am a 4<sup>th</sup> generation dairy farmer from Coventry. I currently operate a 220 cow farm with my father and uncle in a suburban area near the University of Connecticut. We currently have 2 full time employees along with 3 part time employees, and grossing over 1 million dollars, we are one of the larger businesses in our town. The 450 acres we farm, in 6 towns, are spread out up to fifteen miles in each direction. We enjoy doing what we do, however, things are becoming increasingly difficult financially.

When I was growing up, I can remember my father being able to support our family of 5 comfortably on only his income. My mother was able to stay at home and take care of me and my two sisters. Today, my father relies on my mother's income to make ends meet. Our business is borrowing money just for day to day operating expenses. I am at the point in my life that I would like to start a family, but how can I be optimistic about the future when I have to depend on my bride to support me? This is why I am here today.

Connecticut's dairy industry needs help. We are price takers in the marketplace meaning that the price we receive for our milk is not set by us, or even the processors who buy our milk, but rather the federal government who sets the price based on a national formula. That formula does not take into consideration locally produced milk, or the different costs associated with dairying in Connecticut such as high land values, higher labor costs, insurance, and utility costs to name a few. It has now come time for the state to step up and show that Connecticut's dairy industry is worth protecting.

Without dairy farms, the state's landscape would be much different. Thousands of acres of open land currently used to produce crops, would be converted to housing developments, or just sit idle and overgrown without any productive use. How many more people would be unemployed? With Connecticut's dairy farm numbers dwindling to under 150, further attrition would spell disaster for not only the farmers, but all of the support businesses that rely on dairy farmers for the bulk of their income. Veterinarians, nutritionists, equipment dealers, crop consultants, feed dealers, and construction contractors are only a few of the effected segments that may not be able to continue without Connecticut dairies.

What about our state's food security? With increasing volumes of food coming from "mega food factories", we are seeing that seemingly small oversights can have dire consequences to large groups of the general population. With a local food supply, the state itself can have much better handle on the quality of the food produced here, and ultimately consumed here, thus ensuring greater public safety. Without this local food supply, we will be at the mercy of another state, or country's regulatory and inspection group. Do you think they have Connecticut's best interest in mind? Here-in lies one of our advantages. We are close to the marketplace so we are able to supply fresh products, with a local identity, to the consumer quickly and efficiently.

But long term sustainability is becoming more of an issue. The past several years were very difficult. There have been some short term programs that have helped considerably and all Connecticut farmers are grateful for that. But I feel that a long term solution is needed. I would like nothing more than to have a healthy industry that never requires state assistance, but it would be nice to have a program to help keep farms from going out of business in tough years. Once their land is sold, and buildings are demolished, the cows will never return. As a young farmer, I am very interested in the long term viability of Connecticut dairy farms, so that my generation and the next generations may continue to farm in Connecticut.

That is why I ask for your support of House Bills 5272: An act creating a relief fund for Connecticut dairy farmers, and 5483: An act concerning financial relief for the dairy industry. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,  
Gregory Peracchio, member  
Hytone Farm, LLC  
Coventry, CT